



Ridge Route Communities
MUSEUM
& Historical Society

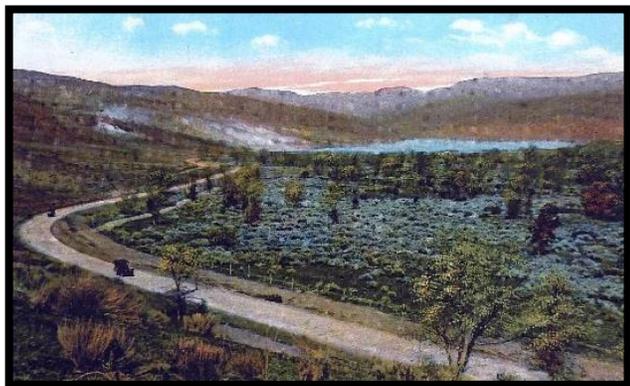
FALL 2019

The Ridge Route Rambler

We're nuts  about history.

Editors: Chandra Sargent Mead & Bonnie Ketterl Kane

RIDGE ROUTE ROAD COMPLETED 100 YEARS AGO . . .



The ridge top portion of the streamlined and paved Highway #4 (as the road was designated) was completed in November of 1919. Some compared the road to those of the Roman Empire, and some joked that it was just one big sidewalk winding between Los Angeles and Bakersfield.

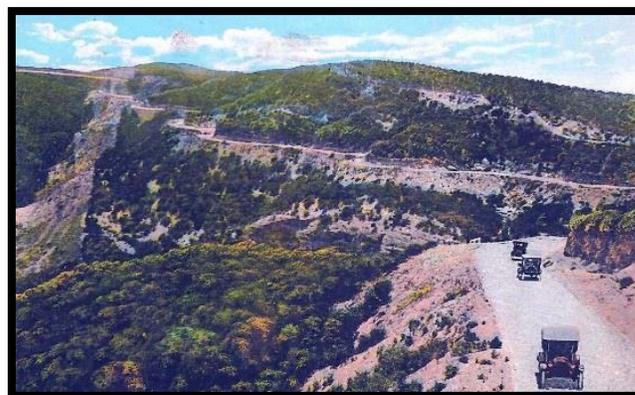
The San Francisco Chronicle declared, "One of the most remarkable engineering feats by the State Highway Commission, and one which will prove of incalculable value to the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California, was accomplished recently when the new ridge road between Saugus and Tejon was thrown open to travel. Thirty miles of this road is in the wildest section of Southern California's mountain country, a section previously known to only a few ranchers and oil companies."

Construction began in 1914, with the dirt road opening in 1915. World War I delayed completion of the paving on the ridge top portion of the road. The three-year delay did allow enough use of the dirt road to be well compacted. In March of 1919, newspapers advertised for workers willing to spend spring and summer in the hills, "veterans preferred" – to put those returning from the war back to work. One obstacle in June of 1919 was a shortage of water for mixing the cement - due to four hundred head of cattle in the area consuming 10,000 gallons a day.

The sheriff's department of the county that it ran through patrolled the new road. Two Los Angeles County Sheriff Deputies from Newhall patrolled that county's portion of the new roadway by motorcycle to enforce the fifteen mile-per-hour speed limit set by Sheriff Cline. The Kern County Patrol, whose officers rode "Red Indian" motorcycles, patrolled the new highway beginning at Tejon Pass. Vehicles traveling on the wrong side of the very curvy road were more of a problem for the officers than the excessive speeds. The officers were also expected to help stranded motorists and dispense radiator water. It wasn't until the mid-1920's that the California Motorized State Police, or State Motor Police, was formed and the sheriff's patrols were discontinued. Those of us who drive the road regularly on our popular tours can attest to the fact that 15 miles an hour is a good speed to go.

There was, however, a challenging gap of about ten miles down through Grapevine Canyon (between Lebec and today's Laval Road) that took well into 1920 to complete.

Today the road is gated and closed between the Tumble Inn and Templin Highway, but the Ridge Route Preservation Organization continues its efforts to get the road recognized as a National Scenic Byway and open seasonably to recreation traffic only. You can follow their progress at www.ridgeroute.org.



Postcards from the collection of Kathy O'Connell

THE RIDGE ROUTE GHOST

As we write this newsletter, we have just finished our popular Halloween "Night at the Museum". A dozen or so museum volunteers, dressed in not so scary costumes, welcomed children (and adults) with flashlights to find surprises hidden on the museum grounds.

Inside the museum, board president Bethel Billesbach told local ghost stories on a children's level, but here we would like to share one on a more adult level.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the completion of the old Ridge Route Road, here is this poem – a bit of a tongue-in-cheek parody – or is it?

*"I'd been down to LA, trying to make a buck;
And things didn't work out, I was down on my luck.
Got tired of dealing with the really well-heeled,
So I headed back home, hiking toward Gorman.*

*Made good time, I was happy to say,
And I figured I'd be home in just another day.
But the third night I got stranded way out of town.
High on the Ridge Route, with the wind blowing
down.*

*I was hungry and freezing, had caught a chill.
When the lights of an ancient touring car topped the
hill.*

*I was sure glad to see that brake light come on,
And I climbed inside, where I hoped it'd be warm.*

*At the wheel sat a big man; he weighed 'bout two-
ten.*

*He stuck out his hand and said with a grin,
'Big Joe's the name, and I'm not one to boast,
But the name of my car is the Ghost.'*

*Well, I asked him why he called his car such a name.
He said, 'Son, this old can put 'em all to shame!
Why, there ain't a driver or a tourist from either coast,
That's heard nothing but legend 'bout the Ghost!'*

*Well, we rode and talked the better part of the night,
When the lights of The Tumble Inn came into sight.
He said, 'I'm sorry, son, this is as far as you go,
'Cause I gotta make a turn just on up the road.'*

*Well, he tossed me a dime as he put it in low, and
said,
'Have yourself a hot cup on old Big Joe.'
As Joe and his car disappeared in the night,
In the wink of an eye he was clean out of sight.*

*Well, I went inside and ordered me a cup –
Told the waiter, 'Big Joe was setting me up.'
You could have heard a pin drop;*

*It got deathly quiet, the waiter's face turned kind of
white.*

*'Well, did I say something wrong?' I said with a
halfway grin.*

*He said, 'No, this happens every now and then.
Everybody around's heard about Big Joe.
But let me tell you what happened, many, many
years ago.*

*At that crossroads tonight, where you flagged him
down,*

*Was a busload of kids, coming from town.
They were right in the middle, when Big Joe topped
the hill.*

*It could have been slaughter, but he turned his
wheel.*

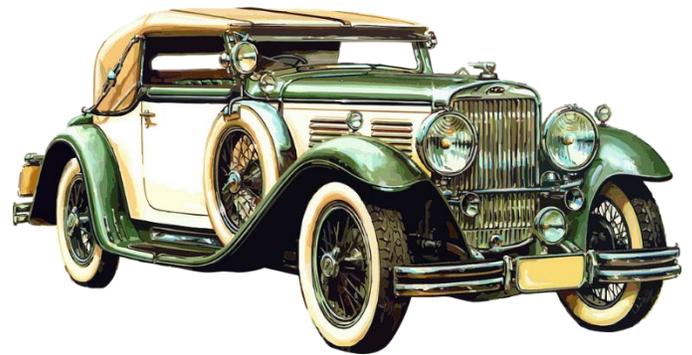
*Well, Joe lost control, and went over the side.
And gave his life that cold, rainy night.*

*And there, at Dead Man's Curve, was the last, final
road,*

For Big Joe and the Ghost.

*But every now and then some hiker'll come by.
And, like you, Big Joe – he'll give 'em a ride.
Here, have another cup, and put that dime in your
coat.*

*Keep it as a souvenir of Big Joe and his touring car
Called Ghost.'"*



MUSEUM WEBSITE

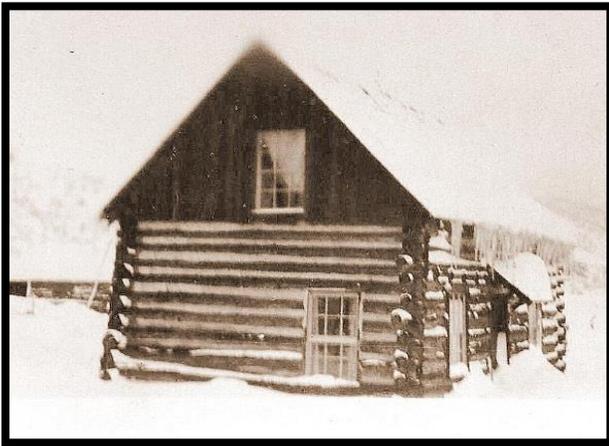
Check out our website www.ridgeroutemuseum.org for recent updates. Newsletters are now current through last year, our event page is up to date and the bookstore has been restored, with a new link to PayPal, thanks to our new webmaster Rick.

A THANKSGIVING STORY . . .

Looking ahead to Thanksgiving, we offer a short story from our mountains about life back in the 1930's.

Ruth and Dale Madison (shown below on the left) were living in Frazier Park and had decided to drive out to her folks place in Cuddy Valley for Thanksgiving. Ruth's folks were the Culbertsons, who had a wonderful two-story log cabin south of the present Pinon Pines where Ruth tells the story:

"We became trapped by snow at the base of Cool Spring Mountain at the corner of Cuddy Valley Road and Lockwood Valley Road. By the time we got to the old low road into Cuddy Valley, (before the present road was built) we found the snow was waist deep! We had to break the window of a nearby cabin, because the door was blocked with snow, and we stayed there for a week before we could go on. Back then, a cabin would be left as is for others to use as needed – hunting, snow, whatever. There were no locks on the doors. You would just sign a paper that you were there, fill the wood box and come back later to make needed repairs, replace the supplies used or to settle up with the owner. When my folks moved away from the two story log house they left it for others to use but over the years people lost that respect for other people's property and the home was slowly destroyed and everything in it shot up."



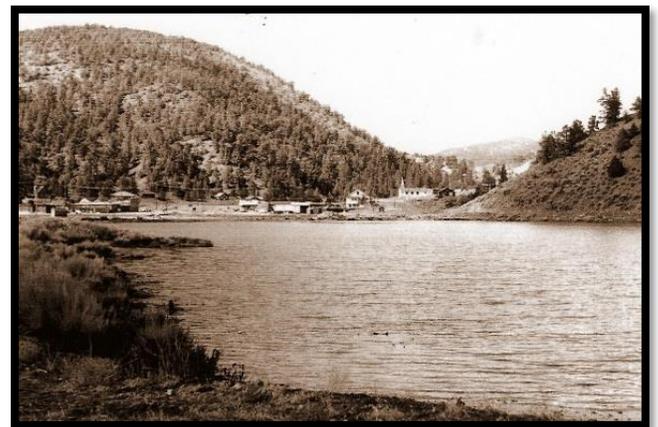
FOR SALE

Give one of these antique scales a good home (make us an offer) so that they don't have to go to the dump for scrap.



HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Come in and buy one of our local **postcards**, like the one below showing the once-upon-a-time lake in Lake of the Woods, (\$1 including tax) or mugs (\$5).



Or, consider gifting the set of "View from the Ridge Route" books, \$90, which would cost \$102 if bought separately. Many more of our books are available on the website through PayPal.

DONATION ENVELOPE

Once again we have included an envelope in hopes that you will consider helping us move into the new year with a cushion in our checking balance. Last chance for a 2019 tax write off. (Make sure to let us know if you need a donation receipt back). Also, please check the mailing label to see if your membership is due, as membership is an important way to support our purpose and passion for local history.

EXHIBIT ADOPTION AND SPONSORSHIP

Live local and have some extra time on your hands? Consider adopting one of our exhibits by making a commitment to come in and clean it monthly. **OR**

If you're not physically able or you're time strapped, consider sponsoring an exhibit by paying for the service of cleaning, repairing or improving it, such as (but not limited to):

- \$100/year to clean and maintain the Cuddy cabin,
- \$100/year to clean the gas station,
- \$500/year to improve and maintain the landscaping,
- \$1000/year to improve the Lebec Hotel patio.



Let us know how you'd like to help. We welcome ideas for other ways to keep us running and looking good.



LIFETIME MEMBERSHIPS AND DONATIONS

We would like to acknowledge those who have taken the big step of supporting us with a Lifetime Membership in the last year. Thank you to Frank Lloyd, Jeff and Jane Robison, Ronald Uhler, Gary Yaeck, Don & Bethel Billesbach and William Henning.

We would also like to acknowledge the generous donations made in the name of Jan Bircumshaw, a member of the Gorman Ralphs family and longtime local resident, who recently passed away.

PLEASE SUPPORT THE BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT US!!!

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THANK YOU TO
 SCOTT & BARBARA ROSEN
 OF FRAZIER MOUNTAIN
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 FOR THEIR SERVICES & SUPPORT




MANY THANKS TO

Tejon Mountain Village 

FOR THE PRINTING OF OUR NEWSLETTER!!!

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR DUES!

Ridge Route Communities Museum & Historical Society

PO Box 684, Frazier Park, CA 93225

New Member	Renewal		
_____	_____	General Membership (includes spouse & family)	\$25.00
_____	_____	Senior Membership	\$15.00
_____	_____	Business Membership	\$50.00
_____	_____	Lifetime Membership	\$300.00

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email Address _____ Telephone(s): _____

I would like to receive my newsletter by: _____ Email _____ US Mail

_____ Gift Membership for: Name(s) _____

Address _____

_____ Memorial Gift given in the name of _____

Address where acknowledgment can be sent _____

Donation: \$ _____ (to help with our monthly expenses)

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THINGS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED



Bonnie Kane held a **rib basket weaving class** (in August) and a **cornhusk wreath class** (in September), (an example at left). Turnout was small and cozy; the baskets and wreaths produced were amazing. Look for the next pine needle basket weaving class in the spring (March or April).

Our **Yard Sale** returned from a year hiatus over Labor Day weekend and was a very successful fundraiser.

One thing you did NOT miss was the **Destination Dinner**, which was planned for early October. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled. We will try again next year.



Mid October was another successful **Ridge Route Road tour**.

Mid October was also our second **Night at the Museum**, a flashlight scavenger hunt. It was even better than last year, and hope for an even better one next year.

By the time you receive this, we will have had Chris Gardner return in November for an encore of his "**Tejon Ranch in Pictures**" presentation. (see right) As we said before, the close-up quality of his photos of Tejon plants, flowers, birds and mammals rivals that of National Geographic!



Museum Location: 3515 Park Drive, Frazier Park, CA
Museum Hours: Fri. Sat. & Sun. Noon-4:00; Summer Noon-5
Museum Phone: 661-245-7747
Museum Website: www.ridgeroutemuseum.org
Museum Email: rrchs@frazmtn.com

RIDGE ROUTE COMMUNITIES MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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FRAZIER PARK, CA 93225

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR
LABEL FOR MEMBERSHIP
RENEWAL DATE!**